

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

Lest we forget.

Sergeant Major Daniel Daly of the US Marine Corps was a Catholic, a Knight of Columbus, who received two Medals of Honour. He was one of two men who have received two for separate actions. He was to be awarded a third but the army thought that no man should receive three. In his first Medal of Honour, as a private he was unintentionally left to guard a corner of the walled city during the Boxer Rebellion in China where the Christians were being targeted for slaughter. In one night, he single-handedly held his post against a fierce onslaught of the enemy, killing over two hundred of the enemy, some in hand to hand combat. His second medal came from keeping his head under fire. His company was ambushed and he was able to lead the men to safety back the fort. At one point, the retreat horse carrying the company's only machine gun was stuck in the river. With the enemy hotly pursuing, Sergeant Major Daly dove in the river and rescued the gun. There were many other feats of bravery that this man did, but his famous line tells so much of what gave him such courage. During a battle, his marines were badly outnumbered and pinned down in a hopeless situation, Sergeant Major Daly rose to his feet and yelled at the men, "For Christ's sake men! Don't you want to live forever?!" and charged over the trench, winning yet another victory.

"Lest we forget" is the cry of Remembrance Day. I say we have forgotten what gave these men and women courage beyond our wildest imagination. They knew what sacrifice was and why they should sacrifice because they knew they received their bodies from God and they would return it if demanded of them by their God, or through God in their country. Their cry was not, "It is my body, I can do what I like with it." They said, "It is your body, I will use it to the best of my ability so I can live forever, my Lord."

In the First Reading and Gospel we hear this same cry over again. That life is bigger than this world, it is created for eternity. In the First Reading, we have the seven brothers and their courageous and holy mother who watched the sacrifice of her seven sons and finally herself. One of the brothers said, "I did not make this body nor my hands and so I am willing to give them back to your service oh Lord. I am not here for life but eternal life." And so, understanding who made them gave them the courage and strength to offer everything back.

In the Gospel, even though it is a story, it contains that same meaning. In Jewish Law, if your brother died without children it was your duty as a brother to marry his wife and raise up children to continue your brother's name. This, of course, meant that our lives mean something more than ourselves and that sacrifice is necessary to build life. Our lives are not our own but for a larger, more expansive purpose, that our lives are created to give life especially eternal life.

Think of the example we receive today at the Eucharist. Today we re-live the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He came down and laid down His body so that we could have eternal life. He did not withhold one square inch of His body, the whole thing was marred. *I am a worm and no man*, which means what would it take for a man to look like a worm? Completely beaten, from head to foot. We come and witness this sacrifice and it was given to us so that we could have the strength to give like He gave. To counter the lie that it is our body and that we can

do what we like. We have been entrusted a body and we will be accountable for how we use it. We are often more careful when we believe a thing belongs to someone else because we know there will be an accounting for our use of the equipment. Lest we forget that this is our life and there will be an accounting of how we have used the things entrusted to us. We are stewards of a great thing.

Lest this scare you and you feel you cannot live the truth of our salvation - be not afraid! Salvation is beyond us, it comes from God who gives most generously. Of course we have failed to give God glory and we need to repent. These truths are meant to remind us that we have failed and we must repent. Go to confession and seek the grace to live our lives in radical and holy ways with His strength. It is impossible that one may boast and say, "I did this." All we can say is, "I am not worthy yet you have blessed me radically and I am in love with my generous God, who frees me and gives me life and opened the way of salvation up to me."

When we know this great sacrifice and know it was done for us, then we, too, can make great sacrifices because great love and sacrifice was made for us. I think this is why there is a lack of vocations to marriage and the priesthood and to religious life. We have forgotten why we were made and what makes us great, and that is sacrifice. As long as we keep saying, "*My body, my rights,*" we will not be able to be great. Only when we say, like Christ and the martyrs and the men and women who shed their blood for our freedom, "*This is my body, given up for you,*" will we live, will we be great again. When you think of it, every vocation is a laying down of life for something greater. Marriage, for sure, is a sacrament of holiness and sacrifice living for something greater. Priesthood, religious life all are meant to be living for something greater, are meant to live life in union with the one sacrifice of Christ who said, "*This is my body, given up for you.*"

It would be terrible for us to forget the sacrifice the men and women made for our freedom. But far more terrible and disastrous would be to forget the sacrifice of God which bought our salvation and to continue to live the lie that our bodies are our own. Let us not forget.